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**DEC 18 2007**

**Ravalli County Commissioners**

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# MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE

*Brad Johnson*



Montana State Capitol  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
P.O. Box 202801  
Helena, MT 59620-2801

December 4, 2007

Greg Chilcott  
Ravalli  
346 Valley View  
Stevensville, MT 59870

Dear Chairman Chilcott:

I would like to share with you a revision that was made to the Montana statutes that could save county office staff considerable time and money. Acknowledging that potential cost savings could occur by using web based services and available technologies, House Bill 70 was passed allowing for the distribution of the Administrative Rules of Montana and Montana Administrative Register in an electronic format. You are impacted with this modification of 2-4-312 and 2-4-313, MCA as it allows county offices to receive these two publications in an electronic format instead of the current paper copy as of October 1, 2007. I hope you will give consideration to the time savings this new option might afford your county.

Currently, each county in the state is charged with maintaining a complete, current set of the Administrative Rules of Montana and the register issues published in the preceding two years. The county commissioners determine where these sets are housed in the county and we distribute paper copy updates to the ARM on a quarterly basis. For Ravalli County, the Clerk and Recorder's Office was named to receive these publications and subsequent updates.

One of the reasons our office pursued this modification to the law was the results of a survey of county officials about the use of the ARM and Register in the county office. Responses indicated that very few individuals access the hard copy publications through a county office. Yet, our office prints and mails thousands of page updates on a quarterly basis and county office staff are maintaining these publications by replacing thousands of pages each year. While we are supportive of getting these publications in the hands of the general public, we believe this intent can be met by providing public access to our online publications. This leaves the updating and maintenance to our office, while maintaining vital access to the publications to the general public and your county office staff.

The decision is yours to make for your county on whether to continue with the current practice of maintaining the hard copy version or to make the move to providing access to the online publications. Please visit our website at <http://arm.sos.mt.gov> to view these online publications in consideration of your new option. You may continue to provide public access through the office noted above, or you might want to point the public to a library where computers and Internet access is readily available. The publications have been available online since 2003 and our efforts to continually improve our website have inspired a technology initiative that will provide more user friendly features, enhanced searching, and allow for us to update the ARM every 30 days. We look forward to the public release of this early next year.

Once you have made your decision, please contact Jean Branscum, Deputy Secretary of State for Administrative Rules, by mail at the address above or email at [jabranscum@mt.gov](mailto:jabranscum@mt.gov) to inform us of your preference to provide public access by using the online publications or by maintaining your paper copy of the ARM and a set of registers.

I do want to extend our appreciation for your efforts to maintain the ARM and to provide public access to both the ARM and Register. Please contact Jean or myself at 406/444-5596 or by email at [jabranscum@mt.gov](mailto:jabranscum@mt.gov) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



BRAD JOHNSON  
Montana Secretary of State